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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [IR](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS CAUTIOUS ON IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Richard L. Baltimore III.  
Reason: 1.4 (b, d).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) Though Iran's new president is still largely an unknown quantity in Oman, two Foreign Ministry officials suggested that his recent provocative statements on resuming uranium conversion are more likely political bluster than actual policy. They preached engagement with Iran as the best way to support liberal elements there. While assuring that the Ministry is following Iranian developments closely, they were not aware of any imminent plans to send an official delegation to Tehran. Disturbed at the notion that Oman's delicate relations with Iran might be buffeted by international currents, they sidestepped the question of whether the nuclear issue might be added to the agenda of the postponed Arab League summit. End summary.

¶2. (C) In an August 10 courtesy call on two Foreign Ministry officials, Pol Chief and visiting NEA/ARPI Oman desk officer-designate briefly discussed Omani views on Iran's current nuclear stand-off with the IAEA. The Under Secretary's Political Affairs Director Humaid al-Maani and acting director for UN Affairs in the International Organizations Department Humud al-Towaiya voiced typical Omani caution and optimism in dealing with Iran. (Note: The U.S.-educated al-Towaiya will soon be transferring to the Omani Embassy in Washington DC. End note.)

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No Change in Course Despite Unknown New President  
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¶3. (C) Repeating several times that Oman cannot change who its neighbors are, al-Maani downplayed recent provocative statements by Iranian President Ahmadinejad and urged taking a long-view perspective. He felt the new president's pronouncements are largely directed at a domestic political audience rather than necessarily constituting a firm policy. While assuring that the Ministry's Arab Affairs Department was monitoring Iran closely, he indicated that no high-level delegations were in the works to call on the new Iranian government, as far as he knew, but said ongoing working-level contacts on security issues between the two states would not be affected. Al-Maani suggested that perceptions of foreign threats against Iran may have contributed to the poor showing of reformist forces in the recent elections, and still held out hope that the best way to encourage liberal elements in Iran is through engagement.

¶4. (C) Al-Towaiya offered his personal assessment that the Ministry had not yet formulated its attitude on any possible stand-off between Iran and the IAEA. He echoed his colleague in saying, however, that Ahmadinejad's public statements are more likely posturing rather than policy.

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Editorial Links Iran File to AL Summit  
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15. (C) The lead editorial in the government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" on August 9 referred to U.S. threats to refer Iran to the UN Security Council as being among the "hot topics" that, as Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi told the press in Cairo on August 7 (septel), make the timing of the postponed Arab League summit so important. Asked if the editorial was any indication that the minister proposes adding the Iran issue to the AL summit agenda, al-Towaiya sidestepped by saying the final summit agenda will be settled behind closed doors. (Note: Editorial aside, we have seen no quotes from the Minister linking Iran to the AL summit agenda. End note.)

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Comment  
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16. (C) Our interlocutors did not deny that Ahmadinejad is an unknown quantity to the Ministry, which had assumed well before the Iranian elections that former president Rafsanjani -- with whom Omani officials have had extensive dealings--would likely win.

BALTIMORE